

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 DHA-02 /096 W

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R 022055Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8086

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

US MISSION GENEVA 452

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 7853

DEPARTMENT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR O'GRADY

EMBASSIES, CONSUL GENERALS AND US MISSIONS FOR LABOR OFFICERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, ILO, ICFTU, AR

SUBJECT: REPERCUSSIONS FOR ARGENTINA OF 201ST SESSION OF ILO
GOVERNING BODY AND ICFTU BOARD MEETING

REF: (A) GENEVA 9317, (B) BRUSSELS 11666, (C) BUENOS AIRES 7214,
(D) BUENOS AIRES 7531

1. SUMMARY. ARGENTINA IS SEEN AS HAVING SUCCESSFULLY HURDLED
POTENTIAL TROUBLE AT THE 201ST SESSION OF THE ILO GOVERNING
BODY. ARGENTINE LABOR SECRETARY PLEASED WITH AFL-CIO ROLE AT
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GENEVA, BUT PUZZLED BY CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR CASILDO HERRERAS.

PRESS HAS REPORTED PROPOSED ICFTU FACT-FINDING MISSION, SUGGESTING THAT HERRERAS INTENDS TO TAKE PART. ORIT ALSO UNDERSTOOD TO BE PLANNING MISSION TO ARGENTINA. SOME UNION LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN VISIT BY AFL-CIO'S MCLELLAN AS BEING MORE RELEVANT. ADDRESSEES REQUESTED FOR FURTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION CONCERNING PROPOSED TRADE UNION VISITS TO ARGENTINA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ARGENTINE PRESS, REFLECTING LABOR MINISTRY SOURCES, HAS TAKEN NOTE OF THE FACT THAT ARGENTINA HAS EMERGED FROM THE RECENT ILO GOVERNING BODY SESSION IN RELATIVELY GOOD SHAPE. ON RETURNING FROM GENEVA, THE SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR COORDINATION AND PLANNING, NAVY CAPTAIN ROBERTO DALL'ASTA, TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE ARGENTINE QUESTION WAS "DISCUSSED" IN THE COMMITTEE OF TRADE UNION LIBERTY BUT NOT SUBJECTED TO "OBSERVATIONS," AND THAT THE COMMITTEE'S UNANIMOUS FINAL CONCLUSIONS ADEQUATELY REFLECTED THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE GOA. THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE ARGENTINE ARGUMENT REPORTEDLY INCLUDED: THE "EXTRAORDINARY" AND "TEMPORARY" NATURE OF THE CURRENT SUSPENSION OF TRADE UNION LIBERTIES TO PERMIT THE INVESTIGATION OF CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS AGAINST DETAINED LABOR LEADERS TO RUN THEIR DUE COURSE, THE RECENT RELEASE OF SOME IMPRISONED UNION LEADERS, AND THE JUNTA'S RECENT DELIBERATIONS OVER NEW GUIDELINES FOR REVISING THE TRADE UNION LAW. ARGENTINA'S POLICY OF BEING RESPONSIVE TO THE ILO INQUIRIES, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE DECISION TO DESPATCH CAPT. DALL'ASTA TO THE GOVERNING BODY SESSION, WAS SEEN AS HAVING CONTRIBUTED TO THE FORTUITOUS OUTCOME FROM ARGENTINA. A RECEPTION AT THE ARGENTINE EMBASSY, REPORTEDLY WELL ATTENDED BY TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES, WAS FURTHER CITED AS A REFLECTION OF THE SUCCESSFUL DIPLOMATIC EFFORT AT GENEVA.

3. "LA OPINION" OF NOVEMBER 28 DESCRIBED THE ICFTU'S APPROACH AT THE GB MEETING AS BEING DISTINCT FROM THAT OF EITHER THE WFTU OR THE WCL. DURING THE ILO TRADE UNION LIBERTY COMMITTEE MEETING, THE LATTER TWO UNION ORGANIZATIONS WERE SAID TO HAVE CRITICIZED ARGENTINA (ALTHOUGH NOT TO THE POINT OF INSISTING ON A NEGATIVE VOTE AGAINST THE GOA), WHEREAS THE ITFTU REPORTEDLY HANDLED THE DISCUSSION WITH GREATER PRUDENCE AND WAS ABLE TO EXERT ITS ALLEGED "MAJORITY INFLUENCE" IN THE ILO SO

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THAT THE COMMITTEE'S FINAL CONCLUSIONS REGARDING ARGENTINA WERE EXPRESSED IN MODERATE TERMS. ACCORDING TO THE "LA OPINION" PIECE, EX-CGT SECRETARY GENERAL CASILDO HERRERAS ALSO TOOK A MODERATE LINE AT THE ICFTU BOARD MEETING IN BRUSSELS, STATING THAT HE "WANTED TO BELIEVE" THERE WOULD BE AN EARLY NORMALIZATION OF UNION ACTIVITY IN ARGENTINA. THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE THEN SLIPPED IN WILD BALL BY NOTING THAT HERRERAS WANTED TO BE A PART OF THE ICFTU FACT-FINDING MISSION

WHICH WILL BE SENT TO ARGENTINA TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRADE UNION SITUATION HERE (REFTEL B).

4. "LA OPINON" ALSO REPORTED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL METAL WORKERS FEDERATION (IMF) ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE EXPRESSING ITS SATISFACTION OVER THE RECENT RELEASE OF EX"METALWORKER (UOM) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER ALBERTO CAMPOS FROM JAIL. (SEE REFTTEL D). HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO MORE RECENT ACCOUNTS, THE IMF CENTRAL COMMITTEE, MEETING IN GENEVA, ALSO RESOLVED TO "INSIST THAT THE ARGENTINA GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATELY NORMALIZE ITS TRADE UNION AFFILIATES, SMATA AND UOM" (SIC).

5. IN CONVERSATION YESTERDAY, CAPT. DALL'ASTA TOLD LABATT THAT HE HAD EXPECTED TO RECEIVE MUCH MORE HEAT AT GENEVA, AND WAS SURPRISED AND RELIEVED AT THE RESULTS. CHILE AND URUGUAY WERE OBVIOUSLY REGARDED AS MORE URGENT MATTERS THAN ARGENTINA. NEVERTHELESS, HE WAS PUZZLED BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH AFL-CIO REPRESENTATIVE IRVING BROWN, WITH WHOM HE WAS OTHERWISE VERY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED, HAD URGED DALL'ASTA TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT CLEARING CASILDO HERRERAS' NAME OF THE CHARGES LEVELLED AGAINST THE EX-CGT LEADER. DALL'ASTA SAID HE TRIED TO IMPRESS UPON BROWN THAT THERE WAS A DISTINCTION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WHO COME UNDER THE PROSCRIPTIONS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ACT OF JUNE 23, 1976--WHICH INCLUDED HERRERAS--AND OTHER LABOR UNION LEADERS CURRENTLY IN JAIL. THE INDIVIDUALS LISTED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL ACT WERE CONSIDERED TO BE HIGH-RANKING POLITICAL FIGURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEPOSED PERON REGIME WHO WERE ACCUSED OF MISAPPROPRIATION OF LARGE AMOUNTS OF PUBLIC FUNDS. THE GOVERNMENT RECENTLY RELEASED TRADE UNION LEADERS CAMPOS AND ALBERTO TRIACCA (PLASTICS WORKERS) AND SOME BANKWORKER LEADERS. MOREOVER, INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY RECENTLY HAD ANNOUNCED THAT OTHER LABOR LEADERS WOULD ALSO BE PLACED IN LIBERTY. HOWEVER, NONE OF THOSE SOON

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TO BE RELEASED WERE EXPECTED TO BE THOSE WHO HAD BEEN DENOUNCED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL ACT. DALL'ASTA ADMITTED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GATHER EVIDENCE IN THESE CASES, AS HERRERAS AND THE OTHERS OBVIOUSLY DID NOT SIGN RECEIPTS FOR THE MONEY THEY ALLEGEDLY STOLE. THERE WERE ALSO POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MIGHT NOT MAKE IT OPPORTUNE TO PROSECUTE HERRERAS AND THE OTHER HIGH-RANKING POLITICAL FIGURES (NOT FURTHER EXPLAINED). HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT WERE HERRERAS TO RETURN TO ARGENTINA, HE WOULD HAVE TO BE ARRESTED, EVEN THOUGH THE GOA WAS IN NO WAY SEEKING TO HAVE HIM EXTRADITED FROM ABROAD NOW. IT WAS ALSO IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND, DALL'ASTA SAID, THAT HERRERAS WAS WIDELY HELD IN LOW ESTEEM BY ARGENTINE PUBLIC OPINION AS WELL AS BY MANY OF HIS FORMER TRADE UNION COLLEAGUES. HE THEN REPEATED THE FAMILIAR ASSERTION THAT HERRERAS HAD DAMAGED HIMSELF IN

LOCAL TRADE UNION EYES BY FLEEING FROM THE "GOLPE" WHILE OTHERS STAYED BEHIND TO RECKON WITH THE NEW SITUATION. FOR EXAMPLE, SAID DALL'ASTA, LORENZO MIGUEL, EX-METAL WORKERS AND "62 ORGANIZATIONS" LEADER, WHO WAS ALSO CONDEMNED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL ACT BUT WHO WAS BEHIND BARS, WAS VIEWED AS SOMETHING OF A MARTYR. (WE DOUBT THIS.) AS AN UPSHOT OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH BROWN, DALL'ASTA SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED BY ICFTU'S GENEVA CHIEF, AGUIRIANO, TO PASS ON ANY HARD EVIDENCE GOA HAD AGAINST HERRERAS TO AFL-CIO'S ANDY MCLELLAN. DALL'ASTA THEN ASKED FOR MCLELLAN'S ADDRESS.

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USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 DHA-02 /096 W

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DEPARTMENT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR O'GRADY

EMBASSIES, CONSUL GENERALS AND US MISSION FOR LABOR OFFICERS

6. IT IS A CURIOUS FACT OF ARGENTINE POLITICAL LIFE THAT

RIVAL ARMY AND NAVY FACTIONS SOMETIMES ACCUSE EACH OTHER OF SECRETLY PROTECTING HERRERAS AND PLOTTING HIS RETURN TO ARGENTINA, PRESUMABLY SO THAT HE COULD SERVE SOME CONSPIRACY OR OTHER ALLEGEDLY BEING COOKED UP WITH THE PERONISTS. LORENZO MIGUEL IS ALSO THE SUBJECT OF THE SAME KIND OF RUMOR-MONGERING, AND OF COURSE, EVERY TIME A UNION LEADER IS RELEASED FROM JAIL, THE TONGUES WAG ANEW ABOUT SOME NEW MACHIAVELLIAN SCHEME BEING PLANNED BY THE GOVERNMENT. WE ALSO RECALL THAT HERRERAS TOLD LABATT TURNQUIST IN CARACAS SOME MONTHS AGO THAT AN UNIDENTIFIED MILITARY OFFICER IN GENEVA (POSSIBLY CONFIDENTIAL

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LABOR MINISTER LIENDO) HAD ENCOURAGED HERRERAS TO THINK THAT HE MIGHT BE ALLOWED BACK TO ARGENTINA BEFORE NOVEMBER. HOWEVER, WE TAKE AT FACE VALUE DALL'ASTA'S STATEMENT THAT HERRERAS WOULD BE ARRESTED SHOULD HE RETURN TO ARGENTINA NOW; AND WE CONSIDER IT PREPOSTEROUS THAT HERRERAS WOULD BE A PARTICIPANT IN ANY ICFTU FACT-FINDING MISSION IN ARGENTINA NOW. MOREOVER, WHILE THE AFFABLE DALL'ASTA'S DISCUSSION OF THESE ISSUES WAS SOMEWHAT GLIB, WE CAN CONFIRM THAT THE PERONIST LABOR LEADERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED HERRERAS, HAVE DIPLOMATICALLY DISMISSED HIM AS A "MEDIocre LEADER" OR "NOT A LABOR LEADER AT ALL, JUST A PLAYBOY."

7 BEFORE HIS LATEST DEPARTURE FROM BUENOS AIRES FOR A MEETING IN WASHINGTON, FITE SECRETARY GENERAL PEDRO EUGENIO ALVAREZ, WHO HAD ATTENDED THE ORIT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING IN MEXICO A WEEK OR TWO EARLIER, SAID THAT ORIT HAD DECIDED TO DESPATCH A FACT-FINDING MISSION TO ARGENTINA AT SOME DATE TO BE FIXED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. DURING AN "ASADO" HELD AT THE GASTRONOMIC WORKERS UNION HALL NOVEMBER 19 IN HONOR OF OAS SOCIAL DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR LEO SUSLOW, THE LATTER WAS SUBJECTED TO AN HARANGUE AGAINST ORIT IN ITS PRESENT FORM BY THE LEADERS OF THE SO-CALLED EX "GRUPO DE LOZ OCHO" SUBFACTION, ESPECIALLY BY DOANIRE. THE GIST OF THE NOW-FAMILIAR THEME WAS THAT THE ARGENTINES, IF THEY WERE TO BE PART OF IT, COULD NEVER ACCEPT A "PARAGUAYAN EXILE" PLACED IN THE INTERAMERICAN LABOR ORGANIZATION'S TOP JOB TO DO THE AMERICANS' BIDDING. NOT THAT THEY HAD ANYTHING AGAINST JULIO ETCHEVERRY (OR THE AFL-CIO, FOR THAT MATTER), BUT THEY WANTED TO SEE THE CGT IN A NEW HEMISPHERIC ORGANIZATION WHOSE LEADERSHIP HAD PROPER STATURE AND WHICH WAS TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LABOR CENTRALS WHICH COUNTED--READ AFL-CIO AND CGT--AND NOT MERE ERRAND BOYS. ELORZA, WHO WAS MORE RESTRAINED ON THIS POINT, EXPRESSED A STRONG DESIRE, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE INABILITY TO CONSUMMATE RECENTLY PLANNED VISITS TO WASHINGTON BY EX-OCHO REPRESENTATIVES, TO SEE AN AFL-CIO DELEGATION HEADED BY MCLELLAN VISIT ARGENTINA AND PICK UP THE DISCUSSION WHERE IT LEFT OFF WHEN INTERRUPTED LAST MARCH. SUSLOW SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE MORE DETAILS AND THE ATMOSPHERICS OF THE DISCUSSION

AT THE ASADO.

8. DURING THE ARA LABOR OFFICER'S CONFERENCE IN SAN JOSE,
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MCLELLAN MENTIONED TO LABATT THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT BE
ABLE TO VISIT ARGENTINA IN DECEMBER. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S
LEARNING WHETHER MCLELLAN HAS TRAVEL PLANS. ALSO INTERESTED
IN ASCERTAINING PROPOSED DATES OF ICFTU VISIT AND WHETHER
THIS WILL BE JOINT MISSION WITH ORIT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING REPORTS, RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGS, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BUENOS07853
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760448-0121
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761276/aaaacnyb.tel
Line Count: 292
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 GENEVA 9317, 76 BRUSSELS 11666, 76 BUENOS AIRES 7214, 76 BUENOS AIRES 7531
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPERCUSSIONS FOR ARGENTINA OF 201ST SESSION OF ILO GOVERNING BODY AND ICFTU BOARD MEETING
TAGS: ELAB, PORG, AR, ILO, ICFTU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006